

§ 14-163.1. Assaulting a law enforcement agency animal, an assistance animal, or a search and rescue animal.

(a) The following definitions apply in this section:

- (1) Assistance animal. – An animal that is trained and may be used to assist a "person with a disability" as defined in G.S. 168A-3. The term "assistance animal" is not limited to a dog and includes any animal trained to assist a person with a disability as provided in Article 1 of Chapter 168 of the General Statutes.
- (2) Law enforcement agency animal. – An animal that is trained and may be used to assist a law enforcement officer in the performance of the officer's official duties.
- (3) Harm. – Any injury, illness, or other physiological impairment; or any behavioral impairment that impedes or interferes with duties performed by a law enforcement agency animal or an assistance animal.
- (3a) Search and rescue animal. – An animal that is trained and may be used to assist in a search and rescue operation.
- (4) Serious harm. – Harm that does any of the following:
 - a. Creates a substantial risk of death.
 - b. Causes maiming or causes substantial loss or impairment of bodily function.
 - c. Causes acute pain of a duration that results in substantial suffering.
 - d. Requires retraining of the law enforcement agency animal or assistance animal.
 - e. Requires retirement of the law enforcement agency animal or assistance animal from performing duties.

(a1) Any person who knows or has reason to know that an animal is a law enforcement agency animal, an assistance animal, or a search and rescue animal and who willfully kills the animal is guilty of a Class H felony.

(b) Any person who knows or has reason to know that an animal is a law enforcement agency animal, an assistance animal, or a search and rescue animal and who willfully causes or attempts to cause serious harm to the animal is guilty of a Class I felony.

(c) Unless the conduct is covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, any person who knows or has reason to know that an animal is a law enforcement agency animal, an assistance animal, or a search and rescue animal and who willfully causes or attempts to cause harm to the animal is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(d) Unless the conduct is covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, any person who knows or has reason to know that an animal is a law enforcement agency animal, an assistance animal, or a search and rescue animal and who willfully taunts, teases, harasses, delays, obstructs, or attempts to delay or obstruct the animal in the performance of its duty as a law enforcement agency animal, an assistance animal, or a search and rescue animal is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

(d1) A defendant convicted of a violation of this section shall be ordered to make restitution to the person with a disability, or to a person, group, or law enforcement agency who owns or is responsible for the care of the law enforcement agency animal or search and rescue animal for any of the following as appropriate:

- (1) Veterinary, medical care, and boarding expenses for the law enforcement agency animal, the assistance animal, or the search and rescue animal.
- (2) Medical expenses for the person with the disability relating to the harm inflicted upon the assistance animal.

- (3) Replacement and training or retraining expenses for the law enforcement agency animal, the assistance animal, or the search and rescue animal.
- (4) Expenses incurred to provide temporary mobility services to the person with a disability.
- (5) Wages or income lost while the person with a disability is with the assistance animal receiving training or retraining.
- (6) The salary of the law enforcement agency animal handler as a result of the lost services to the agency during the time the handler is with the law enforcement agency animal receiving training or retraining.
- (6a) The salary of the search and rescue animal handler as a result of the search and rescue services lost during the time the handler is with the search and rescue animal receiving training or retraining.
- (7) Any other expense reasonably incurred as a result of the offense.
- (e) This section shall not apply to a licensed veterinarian whose conduct is in accordance with Article 11 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes.
- (f) Self-defense is an affirmative defense to a violation of this section.
- (g) Nothing in this section shall affect any civil remedies available for violation of this section. (1983, c. 646, s. 1; 1993, c. 539, s. 108; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1995, c. 258, s. 1; 2001-411, s. 1; 2005-184, s. 1; 2007-80, s. 1; 2009-460, s. 1.)